JIM LEE

W.I.L.D.C.A.T.S

COVERT-ACTION-TEAMS™

DC

1 AUG

1ST SENSES SHATTERING ISSUE!

J'M LEE
WILLIAMS

WILDC.A.T.S
COVERT-ACTION-TEAMS™

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What a *wild* trip it's been so far. Six years and roughly 2000 pages ago, I broke into the comics field. At the time, I had just graduated from college and was making what seemed to me to be fairly monumental decisions about my life. Having decided to postpone a career in medicine, I was determined to make it in the field which so enthralled me when I was younger; namely comics.

Unfortunately I couldn't draw. At least not well enough to get me work. Beyond even the most rudimentary aspects of the business such as paper dimensions, tools, zipatone, etc., I had *a lot* to learn about storytelling, anatomy, perspective, and lighting, and I still do, but that's another column altogether.

I created my first "professional" comic book submission in the summer of 1986 entitled the Wild Boys involving an espionage agency called International Operations. The co-writer of that *sublime* piece of work was coincidentally enough—Brandon Choi—who at the time was still in college getting a double major in history and politics.

Brandon was and still remains one of my closest friends, right behind my wife, Angie. We've known each other since the fifth grade, and it is no exaggeration to anyone who knows us that we are more like brothers. Although we didn't create our own Golden, Silver, and Modern age versions of our characters like the Savage Dragon's creator, Erik Larsen (whose output *amazes* me), we still managed to waste hours of our childhoods in our parent's kitchens, cooking up our own heroes and villains.

We worked on a number of collaborations, but it was the Wild Boys which got me noticed at Marvel and led to my first assignment there in the fall of 1986. As fate would have it, the only other company interested in publishing my work was then fledgling publisher Malibu Comics. Tom Mason was the contact there and six years later, he is one of the people I work with to get this book into your hands. Being a lifelong Marvel fan, I chose to ply my trade there rather than at Malibu, and Brandon soon entered law school. We were too preoccupied with the changes in our lives to fulfill some of our childhood aspirations to work on a comic together.

Now, I'm not the most metaphysical person in the world, but I like to believe that life moves in ever progressing cycles. We make movement in a vertical plane, but in slow, loopy circles. Suspended at any point in the life cycle, we can look down below us to see past moments and events which have strong resonances with our own present--expanding comprehension and understanding of our lives. I feel I have made one such loop.

Convinced that writing funny books would be more interesting than litigating, Brandon moved to San Diego after graduating to join me here at Homage Studios. I left Marvel to help form Image Comics, and we're now collaborating on a title involving concepts and ideas from years back and were doing it at the only other company which offered me work back in 1986. I'm still learning how to draw and still buy comics off the stand every week. So what's the deep significance of all this? I don't know exactly—it just makes me smile a lot these days. Just don't give up on what you want in life—it'll eventually happen if you want it *enough*. It just may come about in the strangest of ways. Thanks for all the support.

Jim Lee
San Diego, CA

P.S. Best suggestions for a letter column title will receive a limited art portfolio collecting several WILDC.A.T.S pieces. Again, thanks for supporting this project and Image Comics!

THE PAST

ANTARCTICA. U.S. RESEARCH STATION ZEBRA. JULY 29, 1980.

DOC, THIS IS CRAZY. AREN'T WE SUPPOSED TO HAVE A SECURITY TEAM WITH US?

JUST DRIVE, JIMMY. THE SENSOR READINGS JUST SPIKED AND WENT OFF SCALE.

SOMETHING VERY STRANGE IS HAPPENING IN THERE.

BUT, DOC, I THOUGHT THIS WAS JUST A...

METEORITE CRATER? DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING THOSE I.O.* SPOOKS TELL YOU.

YA LOST ME, DOC.

McCOY

THEY'RE KEEPING SOMETHING FROM US. WHY IN HEAVEN'S NAME DO WE NEED A TRAUMA LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM HERE? WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAVE SURVIVED--

WHAT IN--!

IT'S WRECKAGE FROM A SOVIET SPACE STATION.

*INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS.

UNNN

GET BACK, JIMMY!

HEY, DOC! IT'S STARTIN' TO GLOW! WHA... WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

SHAZAM!

GIVE ME THE ORB! YOU DO NOT COMPREHEND ITS POWER!

GIVE IT TO ME--BEFORE IT IS TOOOOOO LATE...

IT... LOOKS LIKE AN ANGEL...

McCOY

SHE...SHE'S GONE!

JIMMY, LET'S JUST KEEP THIS TO *OURSELVES*, SHALL WE?

DIDN'T SEE A THING, DOC.

IT IS NOW THE 1990'S--

--AND JACOB MARLOWE IS IN FOR A RUDE AWAKENING.

FUTURE SITE OF AGE COMI

HEY, SAL! WHADDA WE GOT HERE? A BUM IN OUR NEIGHBOR-HOOD!

HE'S HOMELESS, TONY. DAT'S THE POLITELY CORRECT TERM.

OKAY, A HOMELESS BUM! EITHER WAY, I SAY WE ROLL HIM.

LOOKS LIKE HE AIN'T GONNA PONY UP, SAL!

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, I'M GONNA CUT HIM REAL NICE ANYWAY!

GET AWAY FROM ME!

CLORK!

HOLY @#%☆! SAL!

YEAARRGH!

WHA-WHAT'S HAPPENING?!

WHAT'S HAPPENIN'? YOU'RE GONNA GET *WAXED*, YA LITTLE RUNT!

BATTER UP, PAL!

KRAAC

THUK!

TIME TA DIE!

SHKK!

STOP.

WHO...?!

BY KILLING HIM, YOU JEOPARDIZE THE SURVIVAL OF MANKIND...

YEEAAA-UUNGHH!

THOM!

VAAAAN

THE FUTURE

McLEAN, VIRGINIA. AUGUST 9, 1992. 00:22 A.M. EST.

INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS. C3: CRISIS CONTROL CENTER.

TOTAL PRESS BLACKOUT ON THIS ONE, COLBY.

SO WHAT HAPPENED?

HEAVY COLLATERAL DAMAGE. AT LEAST A DOZEN CIVILIANS DEAD. TWO CITY BLOCKS VAPORIZED.

BEST GUESS? TWO ROGUE C.A.T.S DUKED IT OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF D.C.

COVER STORY ON THE GEORGETOWN EXPLOSION?

RIGHT NOW, WE'RE BLAMING THE *LIBYANS*, BUT--

ROGUE COVERT ACTION TEAMS? IN THE U.S.?

ANY WITNESSES OR SURVIVORS?

NO ONE SURVIVED THAT EXPLOSION, SKIPPER--

--BUT...

BUT *WHAT?*

FORENSICS MANAGED TO I.D. ONE OF THE BODIES.

A DWARF'S.

A DWARF?

AFFIRMATIVE. A MR. JACOB MAR

VNNN

EH? WHAT'S THAT NOISE?

SHHZRAACK!

WARNING INTRUDER ALERT IN SECTOR C3 WARNING INTRUDER ALERT IN SECTOR C3

NO...NOT WHEN WE'RE SO CLOSE...

SHHZRAAK!

SECURITY! FIRE ON MY MARK!

NO. BELAY THAT ORDER. IT'S TOO LATE. SHE'S GONE.

DOOM PATROL

THE PRESENT

NEW YORK CITY. AUGUST 8, 1990.

HIS NAME IS JACOB MARLOWE.

FOR NEARLY THREE DECADES, HE HAS WANDERED ACROSS AMERICA, A LOST AND HOMELESS SOUL.

THE GREAT SOCIETY FAILED HIM IN THE 1960'S. THE ME GENERATION IGNORED HIM IN THE 1970'S. THE REAGANOMIC YUPPIES PERSECUTED HIM IN THE 1980'S.

AS THE NEW MILLENNIUM APPROACHES, JACOB MARLOWE REMEMBERS LITTLE OF HIS PAST AND SEES LITTLE HOPE FOR HIS FUTURE.

HIS ONLY ESCAPE FROM THE HOPELESSNESS OF REALITY IS TO SLEEP IN A COUNTRY BUILT ON DREAMS.

...AND I CANNOT ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN.

VNNN

UUNNGH!

PLEASE...PLEASE, DON'T HURT ME...

I AM CALLED *VOID*--AND I HAVE COME FOR YOU, MARLOWE.

YOU WERE ONCE THE *LORD EMP*--ONE OF THE FOUR LORDS OF POWER--*THE CHAMPION OF MANKIND.*

THE CABAL HAS ONCE MORE ASCENDED TO POWER ON THIS WORLD AND THREATENS HUMANITY.

THE POWERS THAT BE HAVE SENT ME TO PREPARE YOU FOR THE COMING WAR.

ME...?

TAKE MY HAND, MARLOWE. YOU SHALL SUFFER NO MORE.

TRUST ME.

HUH?

YOUR LIFE SHALL NEVER BE THE SAME...

TODAY

NEW YORK CITY. AUGUST 8, 1992.

MMM...? GRMMBLE..

WHAT A DREAM... LIGHTNING FACES... BIG GOONS... BIG GUNS...*

...GOTTA... LAY OFF... THE... SPICY BROADS...

*WE KNOW IT'S NOT A DREAM! SEE CYBERFORCE #1, ON SALE SOON! --TRUTH-TELLIN'-RUTH

HOOONK!

KRUMP!

SCREEECH!

HCJK (VLG!!

BELCH!

TOP OF THE MORNING TO YOU, MR. MARLOWE.

MY @$$! JUST HOLD THE DOOR.

YES, SIR. WITH PLEASURE.

TAXI

GOOD MORNING, MR. MARLOWE.

SHUT UP. I DON'T PAY YOU TO TALK.

YES SIR, MR. MARLOWE.

WELL, WELL. LOOK AT WHAT THE CAT'S BROUGHT IN.

ANOTHER NASTY NIGHT ON THE TOWN, EH, MR. MARLOWE?

5 4 3 2 M L

38 37 36 35 34 33

BRRUP!

SOME HABITS DIE HARD, I SUPPOSE.

SHUT UP, STANSFIELD.

OF COURSE, SIR.

PH
110
109
108
107
106

Ding!

NICE JOB, ANDY, JULIE. I FEEL LIKE A BILLION BUCKS.

ACTUALLY, TWO AND A HALF BILLION AT THE OPENING OF THE MARKET TODAY, SIR.

HAW! REMIND ME TO GIVE YOU TWO A RAISE.

YOU ALREADY DID LAST WEEK, MR. MARLOWE.

HEY, IT'S ONLY MONEY...

GOOD MORNING, ADRIANNA.

YOU SEEM PARTICULARLY JOVIAL THIS MORNING. ANY SPECIAL OCCASION?

OH! I'M *HURT*. IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS TO THE DAY, SINCE YOU FOUND ME IN THAT ALLEY.

JUST *CELEBRATING* THE FACT THAT I'M A ZILLIONAIRE C.E.O. NOW INSTEAD OF SOME ANONYMOUS STIFF IN POTTER'S FIELD.

IT WAS NOT YOUR DESTINY.

I DO NOT KNOW. BUT TURN AWAY FROM YOUR DESTINY AND *ALL* WILL BE LOST. THIS MUCH I HAVE SEEN.

YEAH, YEAH. BUT IF I'M SUPPOSED TO BE THIS JAZZED UP HERO, WHY HAVEN'T I BEEN ABLE TO USE MY "*POWER*" SINCE THAT DAY IN THE ALLEY?

FOR THAT MATTER, HOW'D I END UP THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE? I LOST EVERYTHING ONCE BEFORE... WILL I AGAIN?

I LOVE IT WHEN YOU TALK LIKE THAT.

IT ALMOST MAKES ME BELIEVE THAT I'M THIS GREAT CHAMPION YOU INSIST I AM.

YOU *ARE* THE LORD EMP.

YOU MUST LEAD THE FIGHT AGAINST THE CABAL.

FOR LATELY, THE DREAM HAS BECOME MORE POWERFUL... MORE CLEAR.

THE SAME DREAM?

YES...

"BUT IT'S BECOME MORE PALPABLE... MORE FRIGHTENINGLY REAL...

"I AM LOCKED IN MORTAL COMBAT WITH A MYSTERIOUS MAN, WHO COVETS AN ORB OF GREAT POWER. I BELIEVE THIS ORB IS A CONDUIT FOR A KIND OF COSMIC ENERGY BEYOND OUR WILDEST IMAGININGS...

"THE MAN HAS MASTERED THE ABILITY TO WIELD ITS AWESOME ENERGIES...

"WHEN HE ATTACKS, EVEN I AM NOT IMMUNE TO THE ORB'S POWER...

"IT TEARS AT THE VERY FABRIC OF MY BEING. STRETCHING -- STRAINING -- EXTENDING MY LIFE FORCE TO ITS VERY LIMITS...

"AND FOR AN INSTANT, TIME AND SPACE STAND STILL AROUND ME...

"...ONLY TO SUDDENLY SHATTER.

"AND I AM LOST IN PLANES OF EXISTENCE FROM THE PAST IMMEMORIAL TO THE FUTURE IMPONDERABLE.

"I SEE MY DEATH, MY REBIRTH AND MY DISCOVERY OF YOU...

"I FELT ONLY A FRACTION OF THE ORB'S POWER, MARLOWE. BUT I KNOW IT CAN ALTER THE VERY FATE OF OUR FUTURE.

"...I SEE CONVERGING TIMELINES AND THEIR MOMENT OF NEXUS WITH OUR REALITY.

SUCH ARE THE PORTENTS OF MY DREAM, MARLOWE. THE VISIONS REVEAL TIME LINES MERGING AT A CRUCIAL NEXUS VERY SOON.

IN ONE OF THEM, I EVEN WITNESS...YOUR *DEATH*. BUT IT IS ONLY ONE OF MANY POSSIBILITIES.

OUR ONLY HOPE IS TO USE THIS FORE-SIGHT TO ALTER THE PATH OF THE FUTURE BEFORE THAT MOMENT IN TIME CAN OCCUR.

WELL, WE'VE BEEN LUCKY UP TO NOW.

WE'VE AT LEAST HAD THE TIME TO PREPARE FOR WHAT-EVER HAPPENS.

ARE THE *GIFTED ONES* READY, WITH ONLY A FEW MONTHS OF PREPARATION?

THEY'LL BE ABLE TO HOLD THEIR OWN. SPARTAN'S FINISHED PUTTING 'EM THROUGH BOOT CAMP. HE THINKS THEY'RE READY.

SPARTAN! WHAT'S OUR STATUS?

MIRV'S ALMOST ON LINE, SIR. I'M INSTALLING THE LAST OF THE AVIONICS AND E.C.M. BLACKBOXES. WE'LL HAVE THE HOTTEST BIRD IN THE SKY, SIR.

AS FOR MAUL AND WARBLADE, IT'S A THUMBS-UP. I'VE BEEN TRAINING WITH THEM AT FULL SPEED NOW IN THE C.T.R.*

THEY'LL BE READY WHEN WE NEED THEM. NO DOUBT ABOUT IT--

*COMBAT TRAINING ROOM.

SSKRAAASH!

LOOK OUT, MARLOWE!

WHAT THE HELL?!

UNNGHH!

WHERE'D'YA GO, *WARBLADE?* DON'T YA WANT TO PLAY NO MORE?

EXPLANATION, WARBLADE! *NOW!*

WHAT'S IT LOOK LIKE, COACH? THE BOY'S GROWN TOO BIG FOR HIS BRAIN AGAIN.

YOU CALL THIS READY, SPARTAN?

I'D JUST AS SOON FIGHT THE CABAL BY MYSELF!

MAYBE I COULD AFFORD A YOUNGBLOOD OR TWO.

JUST CLEAN UP THIS MESS FOR NOW.

I'VE GOT AN APPOINT-MENT.

CHESAPEAKE BAY.

BEHEMOTH SILENTLY NAVIGATES THE DEPTHS TOWARD THE POTOMAC RIVER. THOUGH LARGER THAN A NUCLEAR SUBMARINE, SHE DOESN'T REGISTER ON ANY EXISTING FORM OF SONAR--

--A VITAL ABILITY SINCE SHE SERVES AS THE HEADQUARTERS FOR THE CABAL AND ITS LEADER, HELSPONT.

GENTLEMEN, NOW THAT OUR MOLE IN WASHINGTON IS SECURE, WE MAY BEGIN THE *REUNIFICATION*.

SOON OUR DAEMONITE BROTHERS SHALL JOIN US IN CONQUERING THIS MISBEGOTTEN PLANET.

EACH OF YOU STOOD TO PROFIT IMMEASURABLY FROM THE SUCCESS OF THIS ENDEAVOR. HOWEVER, *ONE* AMONGST YOU HAS DECIDED TO ENRICH HIMSELF BY BETRAYING US *ALL*.

STRONG WORDS, HELSPONT. YOU HAVE ANY *PROOF*?

YOU SEEM REALLY *HUNGRY*, AL.

IT'S "ALBERTO", MR. CASSINI TO *YOU*, PIKE.

ONCE UPON A TIME, I PAID A MAN THIRTY SILVER PIECES TO BETRAY HIS OWN MENTOR.

HOW MUCH DID THE GNOME PAY *YOU*, ALBERTO?

I DON'T KNOW WHA--

PIKE.

WRONG ANSWER, AL.

-:GHASP:-

STILL HUNGRY, AL? THEN, EAT HEARTY!

SPLUTCH!

...MRMBLGK...

AFTER ALL...

...A CONDEMNED MAN'S ENTITLED TO HIS LAST MEAL.

UNFORTUNATELY, CASSINI'S DEATH IS OF LITTLE CONSOLATION. THE DAMAGE IS DONE.

WE MUST FIND THE THIRD GIFTED ONE OURSELVES.

PROVIDENCE, WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

SHE HAS THE *SIGHT*. IF SHE IS TURNED BY THE *KHERUBIM*, THEN REUNIFICATION, ITSELF, IS *IMPERILED*.

THE ONE YOU SEEK... IS NEAR--IN A PLACE FILLED WITH PAIN AND LUSTFUL DESIRES. BUT *BEWARE*, HELSPONT!

AND TIME GROWS SHORT. WE MUST FIND HER...

"...BEFORE THE GNOME CAN SELL THIS ONE TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER."

SHZRAK!

SALUTATIONS, JACOB MARLOWE.

A CODA ASSASSIN? I'M IMPRESSED, GNOME.

YOU FLATTER ME. SURELY THE ABILITIES OF *YOUR* COMPANION ARE NO LESS IMPRESSIVE.

TRUE, BUT WE'RE NOT HERE TO DISCUSS THE WOMEN IN OUR LIVES.

YOU CALLED THIS MEETING, GNOME. WHAT'VE YOU GOT?

HOW MUCH THIS TIME?

A GIFTED ONE WHOM THE CABAL *MOST* DESPERATELY WANTS, ONE WHO POSSESSES A VERY SPECIAL POWER.

I NEED NO MORE MONEY.

INSTEAD, I ASK FOR A *FAVOR*--TO BE GRANTED WITHOUT QUESTION.

FINE.

IT'S YOURS.

YOUR WORD OF HONOR?

MY WORD IS MY BOND.

GEORGETOWN.

LAST TIME I WAS HERE, IN '72, IT WAS A QUIET DIVE FOR COMPANY SPOOKS AND OPERATORS WHO CAME DOWN HERE TO UNWIND AND GET AWAY FROM ALL THE CRAP AT LANGLEY.

HOT SPOT

IT WAS THE *HOT SPOT* DURING THE COLD WAR.

SISTER ZEALOT FOUND ME HERE. TOOK ME AWAY FROM THAT TO MAKE ME AN OPERATOR IN HER OWN LITTLE WAR.

JOB'S STILL THE SAME... BUT THIS PLACE HAS CHANGED.

NOW, IT'S THE HOTTEST STRIP CLUB IN TOWN. THE RICH AND SHAMELESS IN D.C. COME DOWN HERE TO PLAY OUT THEIR CLOSET FANTASIES AND WET DREAMS.

NO MORE COLDWARRIORS, JUST HOT DANCERS.

HEY, WILD BILL, YOU STILL OWN THIS DUMP?

COLE?!

THE ONE AND ONLY.

GOOD LORD, MAN, YOU *STILL* LOOK LIKE A PUNK KID!

CLEAN LIVING, BUD.

IN *YOUR* BUSINESS? DON'T KID A KIDDER.

SO TELL ME, WHY'S THIS PLACE SO *HOT* THESE DAYS?

OVER THERE. ON THE MAIN STAGE. HER NAME'S...

"...VOODOO."

THE SIGHT OF HER HITS ME LIKE A MAGNUM LOAD SQUARE BETWEEN THE EYES. SHE'S PUTTING OUT SOME SERIOUS POWER AND PROBABLY DOESN'T EVEN KNOW IT. I FEEL LIKE A DEER STARING AT A PAIR OF ON-COMING HEADLIGHTS.

SHE'S THE ONE, ALL RIGHT. SISTER'S SOURCE WAS ON THE MARK THIS TIME.

THOUGHT I'D HAVE TO LOOK ALL NIGHT TO FIND HER. BUT SHE'S DONE THE JOB FOR ME. BLESS HER... UH, HEART.

THE LORD LOVES A WORKING WOMAN.

AMEN TO THAT, BUD.

WELL, VOODOO, JUST HAVE TO KEEP YOU IN ONE PIECE TILL THE SISTER GETS HERE...

THE VIEW'S SO GOOD, I *ALMOST* MISS THE AMAZON AND HER TWO GOONS WALKING IN.

THEY *MIGHT NOT* BE CABAL. SHE *MIGHT NOT* BE CODA.

AND MONKEYS *MIGHT* FLY OUT OF MY BUTT.

SO WHERE ARE YOU, SISTER?

TAKE HER QUICKLY, BUT BE ON GUARD. THE *GRIFTER* OR *ZEALOT* MAY BE NEARBY.

IF SHE RESISTS, *KILL* HER. ALLOW HER TO ESCAPE AND *YOUR* LIVES ARE FORFEIT.

WAIT A SECOND. THEY'RE AFTER HER, NOT ME. HOW DO THEY KNOW ABOUT VOODOO?

WHAT THE @#%&!?

BACK ME UP, K'NAR.

BACK OFF, MAN! THIS SEAT'S MINE!

YOU'RE COMING WITH ME, BABE!

HE'S ACTING DRUNK. PLAY IT SMART, GIRL! STAY BACK FROM THE EDGE!

AIIIEEEE!

SHE'S FREAKING OUT! WHAT'S SHE SEEING THAT I'M NOT?

SO, YOU SEE US AS WE TRULY ARE.

THEN YOU ARE INDEED DANGEROUS TO THE CABAL.

GE--GET AWAY...FROM ME!!

WHAT'RE YOU--UUNGGH!

SHUT UP!

KRAK!

MOVE ASIDE, HUMAN SCUM!

BLAM!

THEY'VE MADE THEIR MOVE!

LET ME OUTTA...

...GOT A GUN...

THEY'RE SHOOTING...

...CALL THE POLICE...

THE WOMAN'S MAKING HERS BY BLOCKING THE EXIT.

JUST KILLED TWO MEN WITH A SINGLE STROKE. SHE'S CODA, ALL RIGHT.

THE CLEF BLADE'S THEIR SIGNATURE.

IT'S SACRED--ONLY SUPPOSED TO BE USED FOR...DUELS.

SHE KNOWS I'M HERE.

CALLING ME OUT.

LOOKS LIKE SISTER ZEALOT'S NOT GOING TO MAKE THIS PARTY.

I'M ON MY OWN AGAIN. BUT THAT'S O.K.

HATE HER BACK-SEAT COACHING, ANYWAY.

HEY! YOU'RE SHAFT, AREN'T YOU?!

DO SOMETHING!

AH, MY ADORING PUBLIC.

K'NAR! FORGET THE WOMAN! I SEE THE GRIFTER!

ACTIVATE FLASH SUITS!

ZAM! ZAM! ZAM!

PHOOM!

THE MISSION'S BEEN JEOPARDIZED. THE GRIFTER AND THE GIRL MUST DIE.

PHOOM!

ZAM! ZAM!

MAKE SURE NO ONE ESCAPES ALIVE.

@#%&*! FLASH SUITS. ENERGY WILL ONLY LAST FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES, BUT IT'LL GIVE 'EM THE FIRE-POWER OF A FREAKIN' BATTALION!

THEY'RE SHOOTING OUT OF CONTROL. DISINTEGRATING EVERYTHING IN SIGHT.

IF I WERE A NORMAL MAN I'D BE DEAD.

PHUT PHUT PHUT PHUT PHUT PHUT PHUT PHUT

BUT I'M NEITHER.

HAVE TO MAKE 'EM ALL HEADSHOTS...

..ONLY WAY TO KILL THEM FOR SURE.

...THIS JUST IN. GUNFIRE HAS ERUPTED IN GEORGETOWN. AT LEAST A DOZEN PEOPLE HAVE BEEN KILLED. WE'LL KEEP YOU INFORMED...

11:50 P.M. EST

...AS FURTHER REPORTS COME IN.

MARLOWE, THE GNOME SAID THE GIFTED ONE WOULD BE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

11:50 P.M. EST 8·8·92

IT *MUST* BE THE CABAL, SIR.

DAMN! THIS IS ALL HAPPENING TOO FAST.

I SENSE A POWERFUL TIME NEXUS APPROACHING THAT SITE, MARLOWE.

WE MUST BE THERE. IS THE TEAM READY?

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.

SHUT UP! I'M THINKING.

I'M SUPPOSED TO BE THE LEADER HERE.

VERY GOOD, GRIFTER! SISTER ZEALOT TAUGHT YOU WELL. BUT THIS LESSON IS FAR FROM OVER.

IS IT JUST ME OR DO ALL YOU CODA SISTERS THINK YOU CAN TEACH ME HOW TO FIGHT?

YOUR BRAVADO IS WASTED, GRIFTER.

WITHOUT YOUR GUNS, YOU'RE *NOTHING.*

KRAKK!

UUNNGHH!

TIME TO GET THE *POINT* OF THE LESSON, GRIFTER.

HOW 'BOUT IF WE SKIP RIGHT TO THE FINAL EXAM?

YEAARRGH!

BOOM!

ASSUMING, SISTER, YOU'VE GOT THE STOMACH FOR IT.

OH MY GOD!

THAT WAS TOO CLOSE!

JUST PRAY THE MAGNUM LOAD'S ENOUGH TO DO THE JOB.

IF YOU WANT TO LIVE, FOLLOW ME AND DO EXACTLY WHAT I TELL YOU.

WHO ARE YOU? WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME IF I TOLD YOU.

AND THE NAME'S GRIFTER.

DRIFTER?

.....

GRIFTER.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

AWAY FROM HERE. NEXT BRIGHT QUESTION?

WHO ARE THOSE GUYS?

WHAT GUYS?

@#%☆!

HYBRID TARGETS SIGHTED. SECOND SQUAD INTERCEPTING NOW.

SURRENDER THE WOMAN AND I PROMISE YOU A QUICK AND PAINLESS DEATH.

AND THE CHECK'S IN THE MAIL...

SHE'S STILL ALIVE! HOW?!

SHE'S ONE OF THE *CODA*. A SORORITY BITCH FROM HELL.

WA...WAIT A MINUTE! WE'RE OUTNUMBERED! YOU'RE GOING TO GET US--*ME*--KILLED!

HONEY, IF THE CABAL GETS ITS HANDS ON YOU, YOU'LL *WISH* YOU WERE DEAD.

NOW WHAT?

THEY APPEAR FROM OUT OF NOWHERE. WITH MIRV NEARBY, SHIELDED IN ITS STEALTH MODE, VOID DIMENSIONALLY WARPS THE TEAM INTO THE HEAT OF BATTLE.

MAUL! CUT DOWN ON SOME OF THE MASS OR YOU'LL NEVER FIT IN THE ALLEYWAY.

IT JUST DON'T FEEL RIGHT, BEIN' THIS SMALL.

AT LEAST YOU'RE STILL ABLE TO FOLLOW ORDERS, MAUL, SO JUST TOE THE LINE.

SKRUNCH!

YEEEHAAAW!

AARRGHH!

WATCH IT, PONY-TAIL, THE WOMAN DIES HARD.

SLASH!

THE AMAZON BABE IS ALL MINE!

THE NAME'S *WARBLADE*. AND IT'S *EASY* IF YOU CUT TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER.

MY BIO-BLASTS SEEM MORE THAN A MATCH FOR THESE TWO.

SHRAKOW!

YEAARGH!

HOW ARE WE DOING, SIR?

AARRGHH!

OUTSTANDING, SPARTAN. THAT'S THE LAST OF THEM! MAYBE I *WAS* A LITTLE HARD ON YOU GUYS EARLI--

--EYYY!

LISTEN UP! GIVE US THE DANCER, OR THE RUNT'S A HEAD SHORTER!

SOMEBODY TAKE OUT THIS DIRTBAG! NOW!

NO! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!

LADY, I CAN MAKE THE SHOT!

JUST LIKE YOU DID IN THE CLUB? DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF, GRIFTER.

@#%&☆ HIM! SHOOT!

HRRGHH!

WHA...?!

THIP THIP TI-THUNK!

SHE STANDS THERE LIKE SHE OWNS THE JOINT.

ZEALOT. AN AVENGING ANGEL WITH A BODY WORTH KILLING FOR.

BORN A CODA, THE WOMAN KNOWS NO FEAR.

SEX AND VIOLENCE, ALL ROLLED TOGETHER WITH A BAD ATTITUDE.

WHO IS SHE? HOW DOES SHE KNOW MY NAME?!

LITTLE BUDDY, SISTER ZEALOT BELIEVES SHE KNOWS *EVERYTHING*.

SOMETIMES, *I* EVEN BELIEVE IT.

ONCE AGAIN I MUST BE THE ONE TO FINISH YOUR FIGHT.

I'D HOPED THAT *DESPITE* BEING A MAN, YOU'D LEARNED THE PRECEPTS OF THE CODA.

STILL, YOU'VE DONE WELL TONIGHT. YOU SAVED THE GIFTED ONE AND HAVE FOUND THE LORD EMP!

GREETINGS, BROTHER GRIFTER.

IT IS FORTUNATE WE MEET AGAIN, LORD EMP. YOUR TIMELY INTERVENTION SAVED THE GIRL AND BROTHER GRIFTER.

I'M SURE I COULD THINK OF A WAY FOR YOU TO REPAY ME, BUT AFTER YOUR LITTLE TRICK, I'D SAY WE'RE EVEN.

BUT NOW, THE DAEMONITES WILL NOT REST UNTIL THEY HAVE YOUR HEAD!

DAEMONITES?! WILL SOMEONE PLEASE TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON? WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?

IN DUE TIME. ONCE WE ARE SAFE, ALL YOUR QUESTIONS WILL BE ANSWERED.

THEN WE'LL GO TO MY BASE AT *HALO*, IT'S SECURE.

DO YOU THINK THAT'S WISE? WE HARDLY--

WHAT'S *WITH* EVERYONE? I'M THE LEADER HERE, AREN'T I? THIS IS A VICTORY FOR ALL OF US. NOW LET'S--

ARROGANT FOOL! A CODA WILL NOT DIE... UNTIL HER MISSION... IS COMPLETE. IF I MUST GO TO THE GREAT BEYOND... THEN WE ALL GO...

click!

...TOGETHER.

NO...NOT WHEN WE'RE SO CLOSE...

BOOM

"THAT WAS A *COSTLY* VICTORY. THOUGH THE KHERUBIM'S FORCES WERE DESTROYED, A CODA ASSASSIN IS NONETHELESS AN *IRREPLACEABLE* COMMODITY."

THE REST IS NOW UP TO YOU.

THE WORST IS OVER, HELSPONT.

WITH THE KHERUBIM DEAD, ANYONE ELSE, BY COMPARISON, WILL BE SMALL POTATOS.

AND PROJECT REUNIFICATION? WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD FROM M'KOI?

EVERYTHING'S RIGHT ON SCHEDULE. I'LL HAVE ACCESS TO THE *NASA* SECURITY PASSES WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

'COURSE, I'LL HAVE TO CHECK WITH MARILYN JUST TO MAKE SURE.

NEXT ISSUE ➡ CHUTES AND LADDERS! QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS!

ZONE